

AU/ACSC/090/2000-04

AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

THE UTILITY AND CONSEQUENCES OF USING IMPRESSED
CHILD SOLDIERS IN AFRICA'S CONTEMPORARY WARS

by

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A Research Report Submitted to the Faculty

In Partial Fulfillment of the Graduation Requirements

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Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama

April 2000

Report Documentation Page				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.					
1. REPORT DATE APR 2000		2. REPORT TYPE N/A		3. DATES COVERED -	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE The Utility and Consequences of Using Impressed Child Soldiers in Africa's Contemporary Wars				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Air University Press Maxwell AFB, AL 36112-6615				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release, distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 55	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

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Preface

This research paper highlights the utility and the consequences of using children in African civil wars. Specifically, it focuses on three countries: Uganda, Rwanda and Sierra Leone. This paper has been produced with guidance and maximum effort of my Faculty Research Advisor, Lieutenant Colonel Deanna Paulk. Additional thanks go to Diana Simpson of Air University library (AU) for her assistance in obtaining documents for this effort, to Major Courtney Holmberg and Ms Pamela Hollabaugh for their assistance in helping format this information, and to Technical Sergeant Lee Walker for his aid in giving me material support. I also received encouragement and morale boosters from Brigadier General John W. Rosa, Jr. and Lieutenant Colonel Skip Thomas who often provided me encouragement and confidence. Finally, I would also like to thank Dr. Karl Magyar for his expertise and support in gaining valuable articles for my research.

Abstract

There is no right way of doing a wrong thing, it is already wrong that children are being used as soldiers by various units of “freedom fighters” in Africa and other parts of the world. The purpose of this paper titled; “The Utility and Consequences of Using Impressed Child Soldiers in Africa's Contemporary Wars,” is to examine the practice of using children as soldiers by various African combatants in achieving their military goals. Freedom fighters in several African states have used child soldiers. These include Liberia, Uganda, Mozambique, Namibia and in South Africa during the Boar War and more recently, the latter days of apartheid. This paper addresses the background of the use of child soldiers as early as the Stone Age and the situation making these child soldiers more vulnerable to the units employing them. The skill and experience of the child soldier with the changing military culture and political winds across Africa are also examined. This paper recommends possible methods on how best to stop the use of children as soldiers. The United Nations (UN) emphatically condemns the use of child soldiers. Those states that have used child soldiers provide some recent evidence on the post war wonders of these child soldiers to the state and those units that employed them. The evidence available proves that although international law forbids children as combatants, throughout the world the young are still being turned into soldiers. Entrenched poverty and the glorification of violence has increased this trend; Are children more brutal fighters than adults? Violence done to children and the psychological impact to the youths as teenage warriors will be analyzed.

Part 1

The New Era of the Child Soldiers in Africa's Combat Zones

History

The tragedy of children used in conflict and wars is recorded throughout the world and in Africa it appears to be as early as the Stone Age to some tribes. The recognition that conflict has more enduring roots to diversity tragedy and atrocities to children worldwide, is part of the postmortem of this paper. The Bagisu tribes in Uganda would use the boy child to build round residential huts around the father's house to provide an all around security.¹ The history of cattle keeping tribes' (Nomads) e.g., the Karamajongo in Uganda, the Masai who live in Kenya and Tanzania. The more younger boys in a home means more security they can enjoy, as the boys build around the central house of their father and "kral" (kral is a cattle holding pen without a roof), for protection of their parents and cattle. In early years they used Stone Age implements and spears to provide security, but the child soldiers of today use modern firearms. More recently, from Clausewitz's time to the current conflicts, various fighting units have increased using child soldiers to achieve their mission. In African wars of the last twenty years, an increasing number of combatants are as young as 8 to 10 years old with girl fighters becoming increasingly common.² Three African countries have had a continuing problem with the use of children in their internal conflicts, they include Uganda, Rwanda and Sierra Leone, among others.

¹ Kintu Musoke, *The History of Uganda*, Uganda Publishing House, 1963 edition.

² Peters Krijin and Paul Richards, *Why We Fight in Africa*, 68 (2), 1998, 183.

Uganda is a state on the eastern side of Africa lying west of Kenya-South of Sudan, north of Tanzania and on the eastern side of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Appendix A shows the³ geographical position of Africa and Appendix B shows a map of Uganda. Before Uganda's independence on 9 October 1962 children had been used as combatant soldiers.⁴ Prior to independence there was the rebellion against the colonialists, when the wind of independence was sweeping through East Africa, in Uganda there were many anti-colonial factions. These factions were headed by political groups, mainly the Uganda Peoples Congress (UPC), the Kabaka Yeka Party (KY) and the Uganda Democratic Party (DP).⁵ On 9 October 1962 Uganda achieved independence from the British, who were their colonial masters.⁶ Milton Obote became the first Prime Minister and later President in 1966 after the abolition of Kingdomship.⁷ After independence President Obote immediately declared a move to the left and all teenagers had to do national service.

South west of Uganda is Rwanda another one of the nations we will look at in this paper. Rwanda was formerly a Belgian colony, apart from her immediate neighbors on the east and north where you find Tanzania and Uganda respectively as members of the commonwealth. A map of Rwanda is provided at Appendix C as seen on the African continent. The people of Rwanda apart from French and other foreign languages are united by one bantu language called kinyarwanda, in addition to other cultural values in the country as descendants of one man. They have used child soldiers for many years.

On the West Coast of Africa the state of Sierra Leone has used thousands of children in their conflicts, a large part of it came from the untidy colonial rule on the continent. A map of Sierra

³ Ibid

⁴ Kintu Musoke, *The History of Uganda*, Uganda Publishing House, 1963 edition.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

Leone is provided at Appendix D as seen on the African continent. The small group of westernized African elite's who took over from their European master for independence failed to realize that reforms were required and rehabilitation of societies, which did not have the cultural, economical, political, and social infrastructures to stand alone. Conflict and competition of power and resources among the small elite in Sierra Leone lead to coups and civil wars by dissatisfied groups and units as well as secessions by ethnic enslaves determined to control their own resources in Sierra Leone.⁸

This paper will explore whether or not the child soldiers have been very productive to units employing them in combat and other fuctions in their struggle. It will also take a look at the circumstances that surround their involvement in such conflicts and in their combat, contribution to the military utility of the units using them to strike at the enemy's center of gravity and achieve their objective.

Limitations

Due to time constraints and limitations on the length of this research project, this paper will only focus on some of Africa's civil wars. These limitations will only allow three African states to be looked at, Uganda, Rwanda, and Sierra Leone. On the East African continent this paper examines the conflicts that have occurred in Uganda since the regime of Dictator Idd Amin Dada to the present day. It also looks at another country on the East Side of Africa bordering Uganda on the south, called Rwanda, following the death of President Byariman in 1995. Finally, it examines Sierra Leone in West Africa and how they are trying to handle the aftermath of civil war and what to do with the former child combatants who know only killing.

⁷ <http://www.odc.gov/cia/publication/factbook/ug.html>.

⁸ Peters Krijin and Paul Richards, *Why We Fight in Africa*, 68 (2), 1998, 180.

This paper does not address or discuss the details of the benefits of the various fighting groups, but looks at how the rebel groups used child soldiers in various ways to augment their military ends.

Global Impact

The use of children as soldiers has a global impact. This paper will be limited to looking at Uganda, Rwanda and Sierra Leone, the continental views of the UN about misuse of children and efforts of other states like the United States (US) on the rehabilitation of child soldiers in conflict regions in these three African states.

The UN condemns the use of children as child soldiers and laborers.⁹ It has compiled a data bank on how children have extensively been participants in civil wars in Africa, the Balkans, Latin America, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. The increasing use of children, causing a negative impact on societies and international consideration of the problem is of global concern. The global community has expressed an outcry in the usage of child soldiers in Africa, particularly in **Uganda, Rwanda, Sierra Leone.**

⁹ Elliott P. Skinner, "Child Soldiers in Africa-International Journal on World Peace," vol. XVI, no. 2, Jun 99, 36.

Part 2

A Critical Analysis of the Military use of Child Soldier

Comparative Assessment

The child soldier has evolved in African conflicts for centuries and has been the critical link to success of those units using them.¹⁰ However, in all references from Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs), schools, and journalists, including publications from the West African Economic Military Organization (ECOMOG) the children performed more than the expectation of those units.¹¹ In a comparative assessment we will look at similar events done by child soldiers in different countries. We will look at the driving force behind the furious combat readiness of the child soldier and other diplomatic ways. Many catastrophes underlie the usage of child soldiers and its impact to the global economy runs deep in many nations history. The leadership in those regions using child soldiers to disrupt the state's instruments of power; diplomatic, information; military, and economy including contextual elements in the regions affected.

Politics and Democracy

Most of the countries affected by the usage of child soldiers have political problems and poor democratic policies. An example is in the three states of Uganda, Rwanda and Sierra Leone. They are still under conflict settlement and democratic reforms. The political turmoil and ethnic uprising in Rwanda ended with child soldiers as main combatants. Uganda is faced with more

¹⁰ Peters Krijin and Paul Richards, *Why We Fight in Africa*, 68 (2), 1998,186.

than seven fighting groups.¹² While political and democratic reforms include the referendum on multi-party democracy, which many political parties have planned not to get involved?¹³ This indicates that Uganda still has some political problems. While government troops claim like other fighting groups claim, to be helping the children who might have run away due to hunger or displacement and are without parents because of the civil wars. An example is Uganda where from President Amin's regime we witnessed the highest human rights abuse under his dictatorship. It is after the take over with President Yoweri K. Museveni in 1976 that democratic reforms started bringing the country together with the market economy.¹⁴

The child soldiers had bigger than expected political and diplomatic impact on all the fighting groups. They exposed the children to journalists and the rest of the world that the particular state had failed to provide security and social services to the children as the reason why children had run away from school to rebel camps. While governments blamed the fighting groups for disrupting social services and security in those areas by abducting school children and causing the insecurity. All groups used the children in camps for getting aid from NGOs and other aid agencies. Child soldiers without a gun is like any other child displaced and requiring help.

Economic Considerations

The economies of states experiencing the use of children as soldiers are generally very poor or uneducated. Uganda, Rwanda, and Sierra Leone, we find that they are among the poorest countries in the world with the lowest income per person average rate of \$1.00 per day.¹⁵ The

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publication/factbook/ug.html>.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid, 183.

military use of children is economically cheaper, as they are not paid anything, and little has been mentioned of any compensation for the dead child killed in battle, as many do not remember who their parents were. A method of recruitment was giving the children new names making it difficult for the parents and relatives to locate them. An economical example is in Sierra Leone where children were used apart from combat to mine gold in exchange for military hardware and other logistical supplies. While on the government side nations have often received aid from the UN and the US, \$20 million to Uganda, Angola, Congo, Mozambique, Rwanda, and Sierra Leone in last years budget from the US alone.¹⁶

The resettlement of child soldiers and the building of technical institutions to train them for skilled labor and the eventual return to civilian life is expensive. Another problem is that both sides receive assistance, but it is not confirmed whether the child soldiers really benefit or receives that aid. An example would be Sierra Leone where NGOs set up a camp for counseling and transforming most of the kids to civilian life, but their success in rehabilitation is not measurable. In Uganda, Kadongo (youth) primary schools in Mbarara and Nakasongola were also set up mainly to resettle child soldiers back into civilian life. The fact remains that at the expense of future generations children have been exploited by various units who have benefited from the child soldiers labor and aid given to them by NGOs, etc, in the affected regions. Uganda since 1986 has a record of over 30,000 displaced youths by various fighting groups with over 10,000 youths dead or missing by the “Lord's Resistance Army” (LRA) and the Holy Spirit Movement including the African Democratic Front (ADF).¹⁷ Table 1 shows how the US is providing assistance to various countries in the world, towards rehabilitation and trying to stop the use of child soldiers. You will note that Rwanda has the highest estimated number of children

¹⁶ *The Defense Monitor*, vol. XXVIII, no. 6, 99, 5.

¹⁷ Peters Krijin and Paul Richards, *Why We Fight in Africa*, 68 (2), 1998,187.

affected by civil wars, followed by Sierra Leone, and Uganda, as the countries focused in this paper.

Table 1. Assistance Provided for Demilitarization

CHILD SOLDIERS and US MILITARY TRANSFERS and TRAINING			
	CHILD SOLDIERS		VALUE OF US MILITARY EQUIPMENT TRANSFERS AND TRAINING 1997
COUNTRIES USING CHILD SOLDIERS	Lowest Age Recorded	Estimated Number	Total \$US
Algeria	Not available (paramilitary”communal guards”)	Not available	\$108,000
Bangladesh	16	100’s	\$2,856,000
Cambodia	8	6000	\$1,484,000
Colombia	8(paramilitaries) 15(national security forces)	>15,000	\$33,061,950
Congo Brazzaville	15	Not available	\$203,000
Pakistan	16	1,000’s	\$204,662,000
Peru	11	1,000’s	\$1,815,000
Rwanda	7	14-18,000	\$ 435,000
Sierra Leone	8(civilian Defense Forces)	3,000	~\$89,000
Uganda	Legislation allows 13 years old recruits	100’s	\$1,350,000
Angola	14	3,000	~\$174,000
TOTAL			\$246, 237,950
SOURCES: US Campaign to stop the use of Child Soldiers; International Coalition to stop the Use of Child Soldiers; Demilitarization for Democracy			

Under a comparative assessment more common features are political situations in the area of conflict, especially human rights respect seems not to exist with freedom of speech and law institutions. This situation causes the internal elite and other opposing forces to get a chance to

destabilize the state or government where the military instrument is always weak resulting in the recruitment of child soldiers. Conflict both in the state and outside the state, which requires a big force to cover the perimeter of the force being attacked. The strongest of all was the 1979 war against Idd Amin in Uganda, which had more youths used in combat on record than ever in Uganda and the East African region. This includes all youth in exile through Kenya and Tazamia to Uganda. Poverty and disease with poor or no economic development is the order found in such situations. The government fails to provide proper social services including security to citizens of the state leading to an almost failed state. The gap created by the child soldiers not going to school is that they are the next generation without a proper education, without any trace of their parents, and are displaced. They become a liability in the end and major problem in days to come. Psychological problems exist for the youth and society in the region and are very difficult to overcome. Healing of scars and wounds from civil war takes a very long time.

The UN reckons that children defined as child soldiers are those under 18 years old and are active participants in conflicts. The phenomenon of child soldiers is far from new.¹⁸ Traditionally many generations young men in Africa have taken up weapons along side their fathers to defend their villages just as they worked in the fields or herded cattle in peacetime.

Since conflicts have dragged on for so long in most African countries, it is obvious that some rebel leaders, in the military wing of a fighting unit turn out to have been child soldiers at the beginning of the struggle. An example is in Uganda where those who were child soldiers during the war against Amin in 1979, have now become senior commanders. Those who left the Army, have become Senior citizens in their areas of residence as reports *New Vision* a local paper in Uganda Museven addressing former Kadongo's.

¹⁸ *The Economist*, "Children Under Arms," 10 Jul 99, 22.

Until 1998 the UN Security Council had not even discussed the issue of child soldiers.¹⁹ Since then however, the subject has been raised several times and expert witnesses have been questioned. The fate of children under arms is now recognized as an important part of peace negotiations in many parts of the World. With implication of not only successful demobilization, but also with policies in health education and nurturing democracy. This is similar to other campaigns, as with the campaign to ban land mines, it is the gradual realization of the dimension of the problem, rather than any multilateral posturing, which has the best chance of solving it in time. Many nations face the problem of using child soldiers during conflicts to include Uganda, Rwanda and Sierra Leone. Figure 1 shows various countries in the world with children under 18 in the military service in 1997. It is interesting to note how wide the problem is with using children to perform combatant duties and the fact that these child soldiers are not just a third world problem.

¹⁹ Ibid.

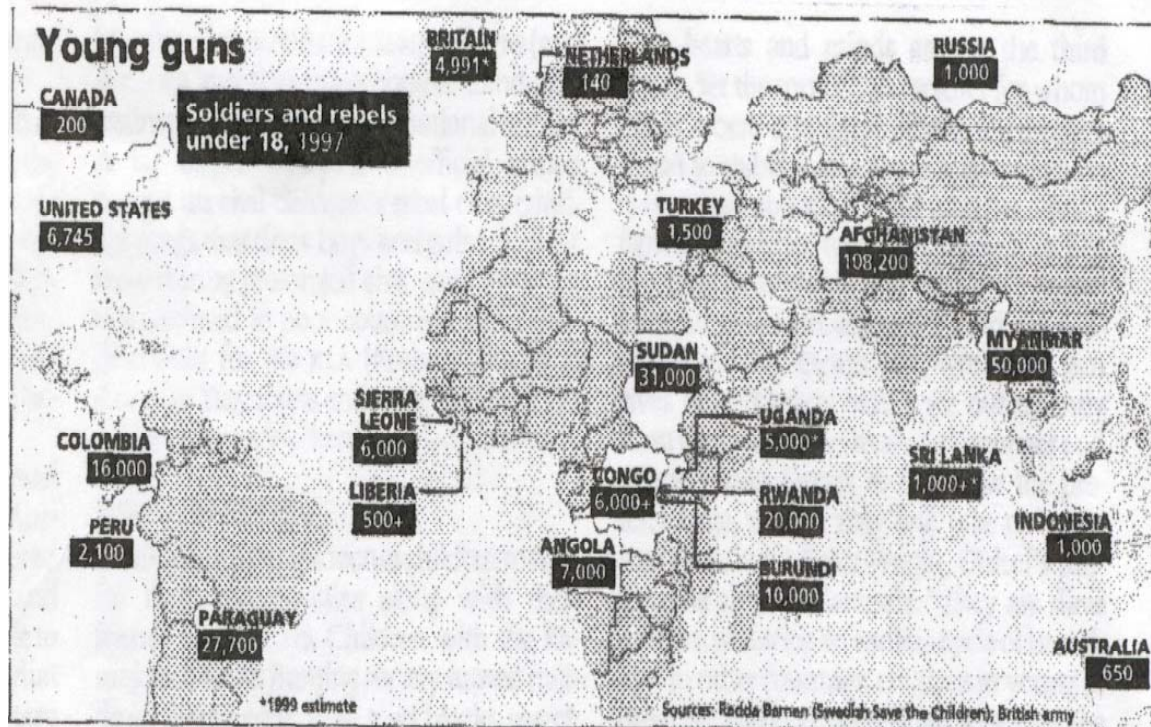


Figure 1. Child soldiers under the age of 18 worldwide.²⁰

²⁰ *The Economist*, "Children Under Arms," 10 Jul 99, 20.

Part 3

Uganda's Plight with Child Soldiers

Uganda's plight with child soldiers began to increase dramatically in 1962 with President Obote, but the socialist regime of President Obote lasted for a short time as he met strong opposition.²¹ This followed a military coup d'état in 1971-lead by Major General Idd Amin who became head of state and the President of Uganda.²² Under the leadership of Amin many rebel groups were present in and out of the country. The harsh leadership of Amin led to opposing units having to recruit and train children, as they were more vulnerable to the fighting groups. Amin's Government paralyzed all institutions and social activities, including trade and commerce, by expelling all non-citizens in the country. This posed a serious threat to the trade and industry sector, because it was not owned by Ugandans, but was owned by over 98 percent of foreign investors.²³ The failure of the Amin Government to provide social services and security to the citizens of Uganda made Uganda one of the failed states during Amin's rule from 1971 to 1979.²⁴ More rebel fighting groups arose and children became the source of recruitment for a variety of reasons, one of which was they were highly vulnerable for exploitation.

Vulnerability of the Child Soldier

The children became highly vulnerable, reflecting a variety of social problems; 1) the roads in the country lacked repair and had become impassable making many villages isolated. 2) Due to impassable roads there was no ability to receive textbooks or visitation of education officers to

²¹<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/ug.html>.

²² Ibid, *Politics in Uganda*, 22.

²³ *The Economist*, "Under Age Killers," vol. 349, (Sep 99), 44.

the schools. Many times the civil servants would stay for over two months without pay and allowances. 3) Villages were left to fend for themselves, food was scarce and new technology left them in the Stone Age.²⁵ The rebels took advantage of the situation and turned some schools, deep in the jungle, into military camps and trained the school children to fight the government that had failed to provide services to them. At times the roads would be cut off by heavy rains and by the rebels to bar government forces from reaching the district, which further isolated the villages and allowed the rebel forces to keep control. The rebels would first get the school register containing all the names of the pupils, to ensure that all the parents in the surrounding village released their children to them.²⁶

Another method of recruitment was ambush and the search of every home.²⁷ The rebels would ask the parents to provide a child for training in order to provide security to the village against government forces that might enter that village. This method met a lot of resistance, thus leading to the death of some parents who never wanted their children to train as soldiers. Another brutal method was the laying of ambush to capture children, especially school children, returning from school.²⁸ This was done in areas where rebels were not strong enough and yet required manpower and integration of other tribes to strengthen and broaden their force. Boarding institutions and colleges were more vulnerable. The rebels could move 50 miles deep near a city in a day or one night and take the whole school hostage.²⁹ They would use the students and teachers to carry the looted property and food in the school to rebel camps.³⁰

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ <http://19.221.15.211/cgi/@rware.even?cQSession-key=xpdqijfxemnh&cq-query>.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Human Rights Watch, /Africa Human Rights Watch Children's Rights project, *Easy Prey: Child*, 8.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ *The Economist*, "Kalashnikov Kids," vol 352, (Dec 98), 19-21.

Governments also used child soldiers.³¹ This posed a unique problem, where as the people realized this was a civil war and anyone-recruited in the government force were possibly going to have to fight their own sisters, brothers, and parents to keep the dictatorship in power. Many refused to join, leaving the government no option but to use brutal methods of collecting idle children in the street and public places like markets under the pretext that they were going to take care of them.³²

The child soldiers having been captured, recruited or encircled in rebel held areas before employment of the various units first underwent training and terror. Then they were assigned to independent missions. During these initial training and terror sessions some children managed to escape, but many were not so lucky. The reason why both the government and rebel groups preyed on children was due to the lack of adult volunteers and the sheer fact that children were just plain easier to train!³³ Figure 2 provides evidence of those who never managed to escape and a clear sign that those who remained, apart from other functions, were used as combatants. As you can see in the picture below these are soldiers and if not for their small size you could tell the difference.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Sarah Erlichman, "The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children: a Report by Graca Machel," *Peacekeeping & International Relations*, vol. 26 (Nov/Dec 97), 17-19.

³³ Ibid.



Figure 2. The Kadongo (Youth Fighters) in Uganda³⁴

Child Soldiers as Combatants

Since children were used to being told, by their parents, what to do they were much easier to train. Most of them were taken from schools where communications were in one language, English the official language, was being taught throughout all schools in this country.³⁵ In addition, child soldiers are easier to accommodate, you can have three or four share a bed in a small hut, tent or bivouac depending on the situation. They have no families or are easily convinced that the opposing force killed their parents. This added an additional spirit of terror to the child soldiers, they did not have a home to return to. Other techniques, such as extreme punishments were given to those who refuse to join and those caught trying to escape. These

³⁴ Stephen R. Blank, Lawrence E. Grinter, Karl P. Magyar, Lewis B. Ware, and Bynum E. Weathers, *Conflict, Culture, and History: Regional Dimensions*, Air University Press, 1993, 45-46.

³⁵ FBIS Document ID: FTS19981203001242, Conflict, Domestic, Military, Human Rights source Entry date, 3 Dec 1998.

punishments were carried out in the presence of other child soldiers and were used as terror tactics to those remaining so they did not wish to ever escape.³⁶

The child soldiers could walk long distances with little fatigue and could easily mix in with the population in the area of operations. Also, small weapons like AK- 47's and grenades were put in bags and pockets and carried by child soldiers.³⁷ If caught the child soldier could always claim to be escaping from the particular fighting group, but was hiding in fear that someone could be following him. The child soldiers, being small in size, made the best force for an ambush in very short grass. They could survive on very little food and were not easily detected by security agents.

To explain how child soldiers have been employed by various units successfully in Uganda by different fighting groups, let's take a look at the military wing of the National Resistance Movement (NRM) known as the National Resistance Army (NRA). During the peoples protracted war in Uganda against poor governance and dictatorship of President Amin and Obote the NRM gained massive support.³⁸ To rescue a collapsing state and restore democracy, law and order, the child soldiers played a very big role.³⁹ They had only one hope in the new incoming government, that of having peace and returning to their parents. This was because the ruling government had failed to provide services including failure of paying civil servants, salaries and allowances. The parents of the child soldiers mainly formed the political wing while their children supported the military wing.⁴⁰ The child soldier could walk long distances with light weapons and food, attack government forces, destroy targets, and return to camp unnoticed. There was no official uniform for the NRA in the beginning, for example if they were going to

³⁶ Curtis Runyan, *World Watch*, "Throwing Children Into Battle," vol. 10 (May/Jun 97), 7.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ <http://.odci.gov/cia/publication/factbook/ug.html>.

³⁹ Ibid.

attack a military camp they carried military uniforms in bags.⁴¹ They would dress in a uniform like the government troops prior to military action, if they failed to overcome the unit as planned during withdrawal they would change into their civilian clothes and pretend to be running away from the fight. While others being young enough could put on the uniform of the nearby school to observe the events.⁴² Those in school uniforms would run to the government military camp pretending to be looking for security, while the government force could be withdrawing. Those pretending to be students looking for security took up arms and cut off the government forces to help defeat and capture the camp. This tactic often took government forces by surprise.⁴³ The government reiterated by punishing the school authority without due consideration that it was planned by the fighting group not the school. Yet they were innocent as the NRA had bought and used their uniforms to dress child soldiers with the pretence that they were students to achieve their mission. Another example was when students pretending to carry out a protesting demonstration, due to the town not having any power or lighting in their district, both the police and military camp in the district were being taken over by the NRA piece by piece.⁴⁴ The students were child soldiers in disguise. The NRA gained ground for control and established social services, peace, and order in captured areas.⁴⁵

During this time children became victims of circumstances to various fighting groups opposed to dictatorship and the take over of a collapsing state. The advantage that civil war has no frontline, while the government forces in uniform made them more vulnerable to child soldiers or various opposing functions.⁴⁶ The child soldiers without fear and grief driven

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ *Courier*, "Soldiers of Human Folly" (Jan/ 98), 52-54.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ R. Brett, and M. McCallin, *Children: The Invisible Soldiers*, Stockholm: Swedish Save the Children, 1996.

⁴⁵ Mark Frankel; Hammer, *Joshua, Boy Soldiers*, 10 Jun 99, 3.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

performs as directed by the commander. They easily get information required by their units while in civilian dress or in town by pretending to be a street boy. Street boys in undeveloped countries can be orphans or abandoned by their parents. While acting as street boys to beg for money they would collect information. At times they may dress in a school uniform and move around with a fund raising paper pretending to collect funds for school and all the time gathering money and information for the rebel forces.⁴⁷

When the unit using child soldiers achieves their mission the child soldiers became a liability. Both government and rebel parties often ask for international assistance for demobilization and setting up technical schools to transform the children into a productive civilian life.⁴⁸ If the child soldiers were not performing to the expectation of those units employing them, the number would not be so high and neither side would have opted to abduct or recruit by force (rebel groups and government respectively).⁴⁹ An example of this was when the Uganda NRM after the take over of the government of Uganda and its capital city Kampala, formed the Kadongo (youth fighters) primary schools.⁵⁰ This was to enable child soldiers to return to school and help them catch up with civilian life. Uganda is not unique in using child soldiers, many other nations have experienced this dark chapter in their history.

⁴⁷ Elliott P. Skinner, *Child Soldiers in Africa* of Jun 99, International Journal on World Peace, vol. XVI, no.2, Jun 99, 2.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ *The Economist*, "Kalashnikov Kids," vol. 352, (Dec 98), 19-21.

⁵⁰ <http://www.odci.gov/cia/pblication/factbook/ug.html>.

Part 4

Lost Children of Rwanda

Rwanda provides another gross dimension on the usage of child soldiers. After the genocide following the death of President Byariman's regime, during the civil war between Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) and government forces, the usage of child soldiers hurts this nation today.⁵¹ The scars and wounds of war on children in Rwanda may never heal. Many children lost their parents or never found them after returning from school.⁵² Many villages were burnt down without a trace of the parents or relatives left. Both fighting groups targeted the elderly first. While children became victims of fighting groups in the area affected by combat.⁵³ The following paragraphs provide briefly how children were recruited, and employed by the RPF in various functions of the fighting group.

Recruitment

At first the Rwanda Patriotic Army (RPA), the military wing of the RPF, was a rebel movement which overthrew the ruling government in Rwanda on 19 July 1994.⁵⁴ They recruited children purposely for information gathering and sent them deep into targets where children would not be suspected. The child soldier was used to destroy or disrupt government forces by throwing grenades into field ammunition dumps, government military camps and forces.⁵⁵ The war interceded and government forces discovered children were a target and a source of

⁵¹ <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/rw.html>.

⁵² Peters Krijin and Paul Richards, *Why We Fight in Africa*, 68 (2), 1998.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Maputo Declaration on Use of Child Soldiers, held at Mozambique on 19-22 Apr 99, Article: 1 and 3.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

information for a rebel force. They were then inturn molested by the government forces and they were the highest victims of genocide.⁵⁶ Their social life was non-existent due to total failure of the government to provide security and social services throughout the country.⁵⁷ This made the children easy prey to the RPA. The only alternative left to the children, in areas taken over by rebel forces, was to join the RPA. First, in search of food and security; Second, in hope that they may advance and capture the next village, where they could possibly find their missing parents; and Third, another hope was that after peace had returned they could go back to school. Schools and institutions were very good centers of operation for the RPF. The RPF and RPA trained the children using terror tactics according to the critical nature of the mission they were to be assigned. Those expected to gather information were those with the gift of tongue. They already knew French, Zutsi, and Wunti languages and they could be taught English. English was very important, as 90 percent of the RPA did not speak French or understand it. English and Luganda (Luganda; Zutsi; and Wunti are local languages in this area) became passwords in the failed state of Rwanda during the civil war. This was the identity used by government forces against rebel forces since the RPA had no distinctive uniforms. The child soldiers who supported the land forces received more training and terror tactics with emphasis on how to use small weapons. The child soldiers quickly grasped and understood minor tactics of Maneuver, and Ambush. The RPA quickly multiplied its land force with child soldiers who were easy to train, and cheap to maintain, and accommodate.⁵⁸ Above all they were not being paid, except for food in return of their gross personal sacrifice of unbelievable missions executed by the child soldiers.⁵⁹ The child soldiers executed many successful missions for them. The RPA was the main military rebel force

⁵⁶ *International Journal on World Peace*, vol. XVI, 2 Jun 99, 20-21.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ *The Economist*, "Under-Age Killers," vol. 349, Sep 99, 46.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

fighting the Rwanda Government.⁶⁰ This paper will focus mainly on the RPF and RPA examples for having employed child soldiers to their ends in various combat missions and those missions other than war (MOOTW).

Exploitation of the Child Soldier

The child soldiers were successfully employed by the RPA until the RPF took over the government.⁶¹ This paper mainly focuses on the scored gains, through the child soldiers, but does not discuss in detail the unspeakable horrors committed to the child soldiers by the RPA or RPF.

As in Uganda the child soldiers were also recruited for government forces, and they contributed to increasing the number of rebel forces. In guerrilla armies in Rwanda the child soldiers were mainly used as cooks.⁶² This enabled the rebel forces to contain the children in one place with a guard while they cooked. Guerrillas usually camped in the forest or bush, resulting in the terrain and guards making it very difficult for child soldiers to escape. Child soldiers were also escorted to chop firewood for cooking and collecting water from nearby rivers or wells. Small jericans (a jerrican is a small plastic container like a gallon or jug, mainly used for carrying liquid) or helmets were used for carrying water. They were also used for many other transportation services, to include being used as couriers.⁶³

Couriers

The transport system by road on a rebel force was very dangerous. The use of child soldiers was a good deception tactic, as the child soldiers could carry line supplies to forward troops through the jungle without detection. The child soldiers contributed to over 50 percent of line

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ *Child Soldiers*, "The Role of Children in Armed Conflict," Oxford University Press, 1997, 22.

⁶² Ibid.

supplies getting to forward troops.⁶⁴ Food and military hardware, mainly ammunition of small arms and light mortar bombs were carried and delivered by child soldiers to front line troops to include force disembarkation points and rebel field stores. This was mainly done at night for deception purposes. The advantage to rebels is that any child caught could not locate or say the grid of both the embarkation point and disembarkation.⁶⁵

The child soldiers could also be used to receive food from relief agencies by the rebel group claiming the children had escaped from genocide.⁶⁶ Any child soldier who would not adhere to mechanical discipline would be dealt with seriously after the UN representative had gone.⁶⁷ The child soldiers while getting relief had no weapons or rebel military uniform.

The child soldiers were also bargaining power for relief and a strong diplomatic pawn used against the ruling government.⁶⁸ Propaganda entailed that the government had failed to protect the children and instead was killing them. While the government tried to defend itself by stating that the children had been abducted by the rebels, they fell into a no-win situation since the rebels propaganda challenged that government forces were really the ones abducting and recruiting children.⁶⁹ Child soldiers with government forces had uniforms with complete exposure to NGOs and the international community. The same NGOs would visit a rebel camp with over 3,000 child soldiers and provide immediate relief supplies of food, medication, and clothing.⁷⁰ When UN representatives visited the camps the child soldiers were paraded around as innocent victims, after the UN departed the military training continued as desired by that unit.

⁶³ *Courier*, "Soldiers of Human Folly" (Jan/Feb 98), 52-54.

⁶⁴ Peters Krijin and Paul Richards, *Why We Fight in Africa* 68 (2), 1998.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Curtis Runyan, *Word Watch*, "Throwing Children Into Battle," vol. 10 (May/ Jun 97), 7.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *International Journal on World Peace*, vol. XVI, 2 Jun 99, 20-21.

The relief received was reserved for main combat forces.⁷¹ The rebels had several camps and could swiftly send the same child soldiers to other camps to justify large numbers of relief supplies. The child soldiers seen to all look alike and the UN or NGO representative really could not tell whether these were the same child soldiers seen earlier.

Under such disguise the unit achieved more relief aid, which would further support the entire force. The unit diplomatic and propaganda mission of the RPF left no chance for the accused government. The government was in a no-win position because they failed to protect and provide social services. Child soldiers were also employed in other services like laundry, cleaning details, the loading and off loading of many different goods.⁷² Finally, the breaking point in all missions of the child soldiers was their usage as front line combatants.

Front Line Combatants

The idea of making child soldiers front line combatants was mainly to discredit the attacking force that they had massacred children in civilian dress. This would lower the morale of frontline commanders on the government side, while at the same time gave headlines to journalists and Cable News Network (CNN) (this is one of the leading news broadcasters in the world based in Atlanta, with news reporters throughout the world). News headlines and propaganda were spread in support of the rebels cause. Many news agencies reported the massacred children without knowing the true inside story of how they went to the frontline. Additionally, the fighting rebel unit gained ground by sending children to suspected defense lines as location finders and clear doubt if there were any planted mines.⁷³ If a mine hit any of the child soldiers then the government forces would rush to rescue the child without knowing that the child soldier

⁷¹ *The Economist*, 10 Jul 99, 19.

⁷² Peters Krijin and Paul Richards, *Why We Fight in Africa*, 68 (2), 1998.

was on reconnaissance. This tactic led to many breaches in government defenses. The throwing of grenades on artillery and field ammunition dumps was perfectly carried out by the child soldier.⁷⁴ They could easily sneak deep in enemy locations and carry out a mission as assigned to them by their commander. The rebels also used the child soldiers to mislead the counter force by following footpaths in search of rebel camps leading to their death in ambushed position of the rebels.⁷⁵ Such ambushes usually ended with the guide child soldier being killed together with the counter force.⁷⁶

Defended localities and rebel field armors were left with a very minimum force of child soldiers to provide a signal in case of any government force penetration.⁷⁷ With time the spirit and will of child soldiers, after terror and experience, becomes the most ruthless rebel force employed for the most dangerous missions against counter forces.⁷⁸ Child soldiers manned points in defended localities in rebel held areas. Either force claimed the child soldiers as part of their force, which resulted in the captured child from either side already being militarily trained and armed. Apart from child soldiers there were other high threatening risks beyond the normal dangers of war where child soldiers were abused. An example would be having the child soldier walk across fields to “ensure” there were no land mines.⁷⁹ Child soldiers also experienced dehumanization treatment with usage of strong myriad forms of psychological abuse. Often child soldiers were given drugs or alcohol to make it “easier” for them to execute their combat missions without fear.⁸⁰ The operational strategy of the unit (fighting group RPF) was achieved

⁷³ Elliot P. Skinner, *Child Soldiers in Africa*, “A Disaster for Future Families,” Jun 99, International Journal on World Peace, vol. XVI, no. 2, 2.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 7.

⁷⁷ Curtis Runyan, *World Watch*, “Throwing Children Into Battle,” vol. 10 (May/Jun 97), 9.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Peters Krijin and Paul Richards, *Why We Fight in Africa*, 68 (2), 1998.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

using child soldiers under these illusive ways. The information gathering and dissemination to the unit using child soldiers was very successful. Child soldiers were extensively utilized as spies, gathering information critical to the survival of the RPA.⁸¹

Information Gathering

The child soldiers played a vital role in information gathering and dissemination. They could dress in any dress or school uniform as per the mission. They would be used as standing patrols where they pretended they were going to school or hunting wild birds, but in reality they were relaying information on the approaching enemy.⁸² Either force can not easily detect their fast and swift movement in the bush. In most cases either force thought the child, because of fear, was running away from them. Yet the child was quickly going to pass information to alert an ambush or counter attack direction to the unit employing him. The wrangle between the Rwanda Government and fighting groups lead to the genocide of children of the highest on record in Africa.⁸³ It is still in a debate whether this was government instigated or was due to failure of the government to provide law and order.

The children on both sides were diplomatic instruments used to discredit the other, where rebels had an upper hand of voluntary recruitment from gained ground since there were no social services and welfare of the displaced children by government agents.⁸⁴ The RPA successfully achieved their mission with the usage of child soldiers. However, by the end of the war every child had gained respective birthdays as per time taken during the war.

When analyzing the contextual elements we conclude that the child soldier is not effected by operational art until the end of the mission. On the terrain the child soldier of land forces moves

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid, 11.

⁸³ *International Journal on World Peace*, vol. XVI, 2 Jun 99, 20.

swiftly and stealthy or unnoticed, one would assume school children quickly returning home. The child soldiers are highly economically cheaper as they performed without pay at times promised that, after liberation of their village they would be allowed to rejoin their parents. Politically, the child had little knowledge of the history and strategy of the rebel force, and yet perfectly delivered to the particular force expectation.⁸⁵ On the tactical level the child soldier performed well with modern light weapons together with rebel soldiers.⁸⁶ While on the international level the rebel group used the children to gain recognition as the government had failed to provide security and social services leading to closure of schools, therefore leading to civilian and children seeking help from particular fighting forces for rescue and help.⁸⁷

Culture played the biggest part in the political struggle of Rwanda, while all speak and understand the local language, French has remained the foreign official language of Rwanda.⁸⁸ Mobilization was easy without encountering difficulty in communication. However, the disrespect of individual values and culture led to genocide, leaving wounds so deep it will take years to treat.⁸⁹ Besides the fighting groups using the child soldier to overcome contextual matters, the fighting groups also used the child soldier to completely disrupt and neutralize the government instruments of power.⁹⁰ Figure 3 below shows that children have been victims in various ways including being used as front line combatants. The Rwanda RPA had a significant advantage over the government forces in achieving their mission by the usage of child soldiers. The sad part of this chapter in history is what happens now to children who only know how to

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 11.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 11.

⁸⁷ Richard A. Mathew and Ken R. Rutherford, *Banning Landmines in the American Century*.

⁸⁸ <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publication/factbook/rw.html>.

⁸⁹ Mwelwa C. Musambachime, *The Role of the UN Secretary-General in Conflict Resolution*.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

kill. It is a major problem facing many nations and future generations depend on how these nations resolve this problem.



Figure 3. Kalishnikov Kids in Rwandan Civil War⁹¹

⁹¹ *The Economist*, 10 Jul 99, 19.

Part 5

Sierra Leone's Future Generation Loss

Sierra Leone is one nation currently in battle with the demise of what to do with child soldiers now that the wars have ended.

The civil war that broke out in Sierra Leone on 23 March 1991 is judged to be the world's worst on record for recruiting children soldiers.⁹² Between 1992 and 1996 is the period of the worst civil war estimated to have involved over 4,500 children forced to fight on both sides, government and rebel forces.⁹³

Recruitment

The children were first recruited by the renegade noncommissioned officer who created a “people's army” known as the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone (RUF/SL) to overthrow the regime of President Joseph Momoh.⁹⁴ Most of the children were abducted from homes or ambushed on their way to and from school, including raiding schools during school hours. Other youths abducted and trained were those working for Sierra Leonean merchants, as illegal “iributors” in the alluvial diamond mining pits.⁹⁵ While on the government force side child soldiers were used in combat missions without pay. Many child soldiers defected to the rebel fighting groups, creating a larger force to fight the government. During this long and

⁹² Peters Krijin and Paul Richards, *Why We Fight in Africa*, 68 (2), 1998, 183.

⁹³ Lecuona A. Rafael, *Child Soldiers in Africa*; International Journal on World Peace, vol. XVI, no. 2 Jun 99, 10.

⁹⁴ Elliot P. Skinner, *Child Soldiers in Africa*, “A Disaster for Future Families,” 2 Jun 99, 10.

dangerous period, all of the militias recruited some 56,000 to 75,000 child combatants.⁹⁶ About half of all the fighters in the RUF/SL were about 14 years old, while a significant number of child soldiers in the Army irregular units and the Kamajo Militia were under 18 years.⁹⁷ Some underaged combatants joined up voluntarily to avenge the death of relatives killed by one side or the other. Other youngsters who found themselves “on the street” in a war zone, viewed the militia group as a meal ticket, protection and substitute for education.⁹⁸ They were trained to fight with an AK-47 as the situation changed. The period referred to be the most dangerous is between 1992 to 1996 in Sierra Leone.⁹⁹ There were many reasons to use child soldiers to include the fact that they were economically feasible. Figure 4 is an example of the children displaced during civil wars never to regain time for school.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ *The Economist*, 10 Jul 99.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.



Figure 4. Girl and Boy Child Soldiers from Sierra Leone¹⁰⁰

Economic Factors

With little funds available to prosecute a war both sides were forced to seek a way to win, unfortunately they saw the use of child soldiers as an opportunity since they did not need to pay them for any service rendered.¹⁰¹ The rebel “People Army” of Sierra Leone RUF/SL apart from not paying them employed child soldiers in the economic activity of illegally digging for diamonds to exchange for weapons and military hardware.¹⁰² Another group, The Sierra Leone civil guard known as “Lamaboro,” used child soldiers among other things, to go hunting for them.¹⁰³ Using an AK-47 the child soldier could sneak up and shoot the animal and then take cover by climbing on a tree without being noticed. In a time of need the child soldier was both

¹⁰⁰ *The Economist, Christian Science Monitor*, 20.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Peters Krijin and Paul Richards, *Why We Fight in Africa*, 68 (2), 1998, 184.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

an economically and lucrative investment. The child soldiers were a handsome prize for any fighting force and not only were they a lucrative economical factor, but they were a source of priceless intelligence network.

Intelligence

The child soldiers while not in uniform gathered information easily and voluntarily from the community, including the spreading of rebel propaganda.¹⁰⁴ The child soldier could easily enter any other camp under the pretext of searching for food, or security, or even looking for a missing sister or brother. Apart from intelligence they also played a big roll as forward reconnaissance in dangerous areas where government troops could lay ambush.¹⁰⁵ The child soldiers not armed could bypass or pretend for fear to go ahead, running back to inform the rebel unit of the government forces positions. This knowledge was critical for any force and helped increase the combat readiness of any unit that utilized the child soldiers effectively.

Combat Readiness

The child soldiers fought without inhibitions, killing without compunction, sometimes as casually as an extension of play.¹⁰⁶ Male and female child soldiers were highly rated by their officers whom many obeyed as they would their “bro, Krio, Lit, big brother.”¹⁰⁷ The child soldier, by size and height, fought in short grass along defined routes. They were quite good in the execution of ambush, which was a common surprise tactic used by guerrillas or rebel forces.¹⁰⁸ The use of marijuana, amphetamines, crack cocaine or a cocktail of local substances

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 186.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 186.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Elliot P. Skinner, *Child Soldiers in Africa*, “A Disaster for Future Families,” 2 Jun 99, 11.

¹⁰⁸ Peters Krijin and Paul Richards, *Why We Fight in Africa*, “Voices of Youth Combatants in Sierra Leone Africa,” 68 (2), 1998, 186.

including gun-power made the younger fighters quite fearless.¹⁰⁹ Figure 5 and 6 shows a girl and a boy respectively who had their hands cut off before other child soldiers, as one of the punishments given to those who escape or abandoned the mission. The terror and torture given to those who lost their mission made the child soldier so fearful that they did not abandon ground or lose their mission. Street patrols in major towns in Sierra Leone were being executed successfully by the child soldiers.¹¹⁰

This continued until NGOs and ECOMOG peace keeping forces started demobilizing child soldiers and camped them about 30 kilometers east of Freetown.¹¹¹ These agencies tried to counsel and give technical training to these children so that they could eventually return to a productive civilian life. Some child soldiers had a tendency to run back into the conflict to continue as a militant. The use of child soldiers and the atrocities behind the merit performance to the units using them contributed to many other children running away from their parents and non-functioning schools to join the rebels and train as militants. Some joined to get revenge to atrocities done to their parents.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 187.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 186.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid, 185.



“They put my
hands on the
ground and cut
them off quickly,
the left first . . . I fell
on the ground.”

—Issatu Kargbo, 13

Figure 5. Example of punishment given to child soldiers in Sierra Leone¹¹³

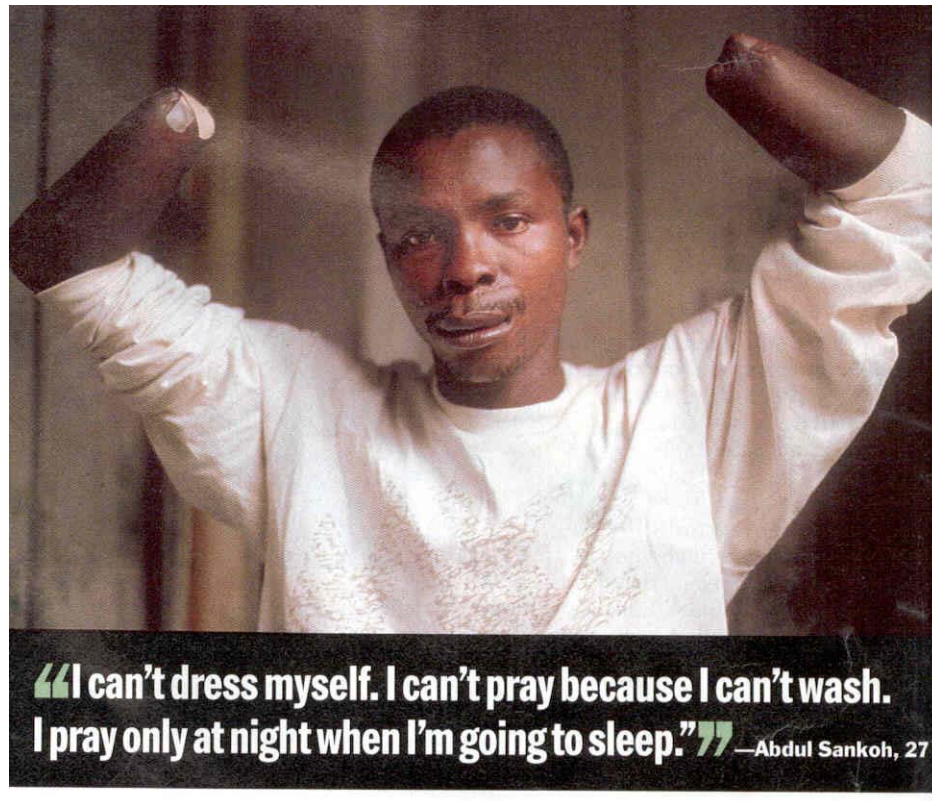


Figure 6. Another example of punishment given to child soldiers in Sierra Leone¹¹⁴

In Sierra Leone the child soldiers were used in combat missions of ambush, raid and interdiction to mention a few.¹¹⁵ They also formed a screen for the fighting group. The highest contribution both to military success and diplomatic propaganda were when they were in F echelon (forward troops in the battle area).¹¹⁶ As the attacking force killed them both sides claimed the children had been massacred innocently. They allowed the journalists to visit the scene after the guns had been removed.¹¹⁷ Intelligence work and information gathering was a critical mission done well by the use of child soldiers. An example is that among those escaping

¹¹³ "War Wounds," *Time*, 13 Sep 99, 36.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, 38.

¹¹⁵ Peters Krijin and Paul Richards, *Why We Fight in Africa*, "Voices of Youth Combatants in Sierra Leone Africa, 68 (2), 1998, 186.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, 187.

from the demobilization camps included some that were sent there for information gathering and antipropaganda. The antipropaganda was then used to frustrate the demobilization efforts and counselors. Other combat missions utilizing the children were to perform combat service support.¹¹⁸ They were using them mainly to carry military hardware into the bush and forest. Every child soldier without a gun was given some ration or ammunition for the fighting force. While others were employed in other field combat work and central cooking in various camps. While collecting firewood around the forest they also provided observation posts to enemy counter forces.

Various units during strife and civil war employed the child soldiers in Sierra Leone. The NGOs and ECOMOG forces tried conflict settlement and demobilization of the fighters. More than 60 percent of “1000 fighters” screened by the disarmament, demobilization and resettlement committee before the May 25 coup in Sierra Leone were below 14 years old.¹¹⁹ The child soldiers below 18 years served along side adults in government forces, rebel opposition groups and guerrilla armies were a true testimony by the numbers of child soldiers shown in Figure 1, on page 11 of this paper. Again as in other nations the child soldiers were used as mine detectors, sometimes to walk across fields to “ensure” there were no land mines.¹²⁰ The recruitment and terror behind their enduring performance is similar to other nations that have also employed child soldier in similar wars. Figure 5 below shows a few of the government child soldier combatants in field uniform.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 185.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Richard A. Matthew and Ken R. Rutherford, *Banning Landmines in the American Century*, vol. XVI, no. 2, Jun 99, 45.



Figure 7. Sierra Leone Child Soldiers¹²¹

¹²¹ *The Economist*, 10 Jul 99.

Part 6

Conclusion

Many children suffered horribly during the vicious civil wars in Africa. Uganda, Rwanda, and Sierra Leone are but three African countries that have abused the usage of many child soldiers. Despite these ambiguities one may find two trends worth thinking about. The child soldiers are used heavily as a decisive force by various fighting units. The civil wars abound at present are big contributors to this problem. There are more reasons for this case, but political problems seem to overlap all the causes of conflict.¹²² From this research it really shows that most of the fighting groups are political reformers, fighting for human rights and democratic changes they deserve.¹²³ From sources available the average death age for most Africans is 65 years.¹²⁴ Poverty and continued fighting in these states result from very poor social services, which in-turn create the atmosphere for the under 18 to be lured into becoming a child soldier. They also can become street children or join street gangs. The *Economist* (a newspaper) reports that in Sierra Leone entertainment is in short supply in most villages and the only organized recreation there is the movie “Rambo” on a mobile video player in rural Sierra Leone.¹²⁵ This type of entertainment may well spur young people to sign up on the spot to join fighting groups.

As we have seen time and time again, when children can not be tempted into the ranks of various units, they can be forced more easily to join than adults. Once secured, they are more readily made into unquestioning fighters without fear or compassion for their fellow man. The

¹²² Elliot P. Skinner, *Child Soldiers in Africa*, “Disaster For Future Families,” vol. XVI, no. 2, Jun 99, 9.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/ug.html>.

¹²⁵ *The Economist*, “Children Under Arms,” 10 Jul 99, 8.

units give these children drugs, alcohol, marijuana or gun power to sniff, to make them fear less, and then perform to the expectation of the units.¹²⁶ The child soldiers often develop the sort of loyalty that stems from knowing no other way of life. This is most effective because the units using child soldiers isolate them from their families with horror and terror tactics to boost their performance. The three countries discussed in this paper indicate that the child soldiers apart from being very good combatants, are also very good scouts, spies, messengers, and decoys for the unit.¹²⁷ The children are economical to the units using them. They need less food than adult soldiers, take up less space and can do without wages.¹²⁸ In an *Economist* article, one Sierra Leone officer explained why Kadongos (youth fighters) make good soldiers. He said, “ they obey order, they are not concerned about getting back to their wife or family, and they don’t know fear.”¹²⁹

We have looked at the gains of the various units using child soldiers internally, but whenever there is a child soldier involvement there is also international concern. A good example of this is the war in Uganda against Amin, which raised world concern. The civil war in Rwanda was headline news on every kind of media and the agenda of many high level discussions throughout the world. The usage of child soldiers by Uganda, Rwanda and Sierra Leone caused them to receive a very poor international image.¹³⁰

In Uganda, which still has more fighting groups opposed to the ruling government, the Lord Resistance Movement (LRM) and ADF have highly discredited the government on failing to provide security to the people in those regions they operated in, especially to the vulnerable

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Peters Krijin and Paul Richards, *Why We Fight in Africa*, 68 (2), 1998.

¹²⁸ Ibid, 186.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ *The Economist*, “Children Under Arms,” 10 Jul 99, 20.

children in institutions.¹³¹ An example is in Amboke high school, in Gulu, where some children and staff were abducted and taken by rebels.¹³² In this case the rebels discredited the government diplomatic effort of saying Uganda has security and is peaceful. By capturing the Amboke students and staff, this action provided a platform for the fighting unit on the information instrument of power that it existed. Though more countries and international organizations condemned it, the unit had achieved its goal of proving to the world of its existence.¹³³ The disruption of services by fighting units in the area of Kases (this is on south west of Uganda bordering Congo) and Northern Uganda particularly in the districts of Gulu and Apatch, has put any economic activity in the area to a halt.¹³⁴ This means other districts have the advantage of prosperity more than districts where fighting groups manage to penetrate for raids of food and young children for use as child soldiers.

It is unfortunate that conflict settlement and termination is a long way off being achieved in Uganda, Rwanda, and Sierra Leone.¹³⁵ The amnesty granted to all rebel groups does not incorporate the demands of the fighting units. Round table discussions definitely would bring peace to the regions and allow peace and democracy to prosper, but what do we do with children who only know how to kill? This is a major problem affecting our future generations and must be dealt with by the world powers, if they wish to succeed in a long lasting peace.

The manner in which the countries Uganda, Rwanda and Sierra Leone was integrated into the emerging world system by their former masters, has left many of the societies incoherent. Since decolonization began in the 1960s, none of the three countries have been able to

¹³¹ [http://www.odci.gov/cia/](http://www.odci.gov/cia/Publication/factbook/ug.html) Publication/factbook/ug.html.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ *International Journal on World Peace*, vol. XVI, 2 Jun 99, 11.

decolonize its economy.¹³⁶ Moreover, the three countries were also affected by the Cold War in that the leaders in these powerful nations did not have the opportunity or will to build viable societies.¹³⁷ Almost every single case of civil war in Uganda, Rwanda and Sierra Leone is traced, in the past and present, leading to democracy and human rights. In my observation to save the African society from inhumane torture, the UN and international community should try to help reform programs of democracy and establishment of law institutions as a means of stopping further civil wars in these countries. Only democratic societies and governments do not allow civil wars as every individual receives the respect he deserves.

The NGOs have been the groups that have been involved in helping Uganda, Rwanda, and Sierra Leone, but it is also clear that these entities are as weak as the children they are trying to help. This is according to Neutral Laws under which the NGOs operate, for example, the Red Cross or the Human Rights Watch (HRW).¹³⁸ Strong measures would come from a special force under UN or peace loving countries. An example of this is The African Reaction Intervention force (ACRI) which has been trained and equipped by the US as a means to react to any human rights abuse in the east African region. One such battalion is now in Uganda¹³⁹

In the field and media all concerned institutions, UN, HRW, etc., condemn and recommend that fighting groups should stop the use of children as combatants, but the fighting groups need more manpower and logistical supplies like guns, communication equipment which are produced and sold to them from abroad. My recommendation here is if trade sanctions were imposed on those institutions using child soldiers, they would not be able to get military hardware to be used in spearheading their various missions. An example is Sierra Leone rebel groups were among

¹³⁶ *The Economist*, "Children Under Arms," 10 Jul 99, 20.

¹³⁷ *International Journal on World Peace*, vol. XVI, 2 Jun 99, 11.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publication/factbook/ug.html>.

other things using child soldiers to mine gold for exchange of other logistical supplies.¹⁴⁰ The international condemnation and use of trade sanctions might deter this from happening in the future.

Problems that threaten the stability among the poor and disadvantaged usually spread upward and threaten the stability of more affluent societies. This is very much a function of globalization where all societies are gradually and often quickly linked economically and culturally. From my understanding the cultural values from the core diffuse more rapidly to the periphery than the economic factors that underpin them. For this reason I recommend early intervention of UN and international societies to any region or country where there is civil war or humanitarian need. Being too late will not help. An example of this is the intervention in Rwanda, which did not yield good results.

The UN and international community should condemn and build up an international consensus of prohibitions on any military recruitment below the age of 18. They should call upon all parties concerned to comply strictly with the obligations. The NGOs, HRW, and media, like CNN, can always inform the UN Security Council including the UN monitoring body if the concerned parties have complied.

The countries Uganda, Rwanda, and Sierra Leone, having been at civil wars for decades, require war termination and settlement which is more gradual. This is very expensive to poor developing states. My recommendation on termination and settlement is that the UN and International communities play a leading role, together with NGOs, for without the help of the Global Community it is doomed to failure. The future generations of these African nations are in the hands of the world.

¹⁴⁰ *International Journal on World Peace*, vol. XV1, 2 Jun 99, 11.

Map of Africa

Africa



http://www.lib.utexas.edu/Libs/PCL/Map_collection/Map_collection.html

Map of Uganda



http://www.lib.utexas.edu/Libs/PCL/Map_collection/Map_collection.html

Appendix C

Map of Rwanda



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Appendix D

Map of Sierra Leone



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